



Chapter 6: Offender Treatment and Accountability Recommendations

Holding offenders accountable for their crimes presents many challenges for the courts, probation, law enforcement and service providers. These challenges are, in part, a result of limited resources, but also due to an inability to adequately track offenders and provide appropriate treatment. The following section outlines recommendations for improving systems responses for both offender accountability and offender treatment.

Recommendations Offender Treatment and Accountability

While Arizona has some of the most progressive domestic violence laws in the country, we currently lack an adequate criminal history database. As a result, in many cases, domestic violence defendants are often considered to be first time offenders even though they have a history of documented abuse in another jurisdiction. This impedes the ability of the police officer, prosecutor and judge to fully hold the repeat offender accountable. (See Data Section for possible resources in developing a comprehensive criminal history database on domestic violence offenders.)

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.1

Increase access to information on abusers so that law enforcement, prosecutors and judges can appropriately respond to repeat incidents of domestic violence statewide.

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.2

Create an Offender Treatment Provider Network to increase the effectiveness of offender treatment.

An offender treatment network consisting of members who represent the ethnic, geographic and cultural diversity of the State of Arizona, would increase the quality and effectiveness of how offender treatment is delivered throughout the state. Ideally, the offender treatment network would develop best practice curriculum and protocols for delivering offender treatment programs. Additionally, the network would serve as a resource for technical assistance for offender treatment providers throughout the state.

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.3

Develop sanctions, such as fees or warrants for non-compliance of court orders.

Warrants for non-compliance and other court imposed sanctions such as fines have been found to be an effective means of holding offenders accountable and reducing recidivism at the earliest stages of offending. Currently, the City of Phoenix, through a grant funded by the US Department of Justice, is providing supervised probation for first time offenders of domestic violence. Under this “pilot program” the City is aiming to demonstrate that holding offenders accountable through swift and immediate action at the earliest stages will decrease case flow in the courts, leaving more resources to focus on the most serious offenders.

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.4

Adopt guidelines for judges and service providers that will guide them in determining an abuser’s treatment and schedule.

The Office of Behavioral Health Licensure (OBHL), through the Arizona Department of Health Services, has published rules defining the length and content of offender treatment programs that are licensed under the state. Currently, the offender treatment licensing rules define the following: first time abusers should be required to complete 26 treatment sessions over at least a 4-month period; second time abusers need a minimum of an additional 36 sessions; and third time abusers should be required to complete 52 additional sessions. Although OBHL rules are guidelines, whenever possible, courts should require that offenders receive treatment by OBHL licensed providers. Challenges may exist for rural communities that may not have a licensed provider network. OBHL should work with those communities to help develop a strong treatment network.



Currently, felony offenders of domestic violence are not mandated to receive treatment while in prison. Once they are released, they may be required to attend an Offender Treatment Program as part of their release conditions. Ideally, as a part of their incarceration, offender treatment would be offered while offenders are still in prison and then continued once they leave (if not already completed).

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.5

Ensure that felony offenders of domestic violence receive offender treatment while still in prison.

Following a dramatic increase in domestic violence fatalities among military personnel in 1999, the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence was created by the National Defense Authorization Act in 2000. The Task Force made several recommendations regarding the handling of domestic violence cases by military installations. Military bases around the country, including those in Arizona, are working to implement these recommendations to provide support to military families involved in domestic violence and increase accountability for offenders. Communities surrounding military bases need to work collaboratively with those bases to ensure families living off base and experiencing domestic violence are also receiving similar services and treatment.

Offender Treatment and Accountability: 6.6

Support the implementation of the recommendations from the Department of Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence at Arizona military bases.



